SERMON

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH OF THE MEDIATOR AND OF ITS FIRST RECTOR, REV. JOHN A. VAUGHAN, D.D.

Preached on the occasion of its Fiftieth Anniversary, Whitsunday, May 29, 1898.

BY

REV. SAMUEL E. APPLETON, D.D.,
RECTOR OF THE PARISH.

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PHILADELPHIA:
1898.

PHILADELPHIA, May 30, 1898.

DEAR DR. APPLETON:

Having listened with much pleasure to the admirable historical sermon which you preached yesterday morning in the Church of the Mediator, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the election of its first Rector, we feel that what you said would be of great interest to many who had not the privilege of hearing you, and we therefore ask that you will do us the honor of letting us have a copy of your sermon for publication.

Always respectfully and affectionately yours,

JOHN ASHHURST, JR.,
HORACE EVERETT,
ALEXANDER P. COLESBERRY.

To the REV. SAMUEL E. APPLETON, D.D.

1804 DE LANCEY PLACE, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

TO MESSRS. ASHHURST, EVERETT, AND COLESBERRY,

MY DEAR FRIENDS: Your letter, asking for publication my sermon preached on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Church of the Mediator, has been received. It gives me sincere pleasure to comply with your request. The Rev. Dr. John A. Vaughan was the founder and benefactor of our Church. If my words of sincere eulogy of him commend themselves to your judgment and that of those who knew him, I am very glad.

Your friend and Rector,

SAMUEL E. APPLETON.

MAY 31, 1898.

SERMON.

"Call to remembrance the former days."
—Hebrews, x: 32.

THE Apostle seeks to encourage the hearts of his Hebrew converts. He urges them to draw near to their Heavenly Father in full assurance of faith, reminding them that they have a High Priest who intercedes for them at the throne of grace. He bids them to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering. They had been converted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They had laid upon Him the burden of their sins as upon the Lamb of God sacrificed upon the altar of the cross. They had confessed Him before men in Jewish synagogue and Roman council chamber. They had been made a gazing stock to the world both by reproaches and afflictions whilst they were companions of them that were so used. "For," He says, "ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in Heaven a better and enduring substance." These days of trial and suffering for Christ and His cause were not to be forgotten by the Hebrew Christians.

The verb "call to remembrance" in our text is very strong and suggestive. Dean Alford, the dis-

tinguished Greek scholar and commentator, says it means to "call ever to mind (stronger than the simple verb); call over in your minds one by one, and as implying a constant habit." "Call to remembrance," again and again, one by one, "the former days." What an inspiration this would be to the Hebrew Christians to hold fast to their profession! They had experienced trials; but how near God, their Saviour, had been to them! They had been overwhelmed with sorrows; but how sustaining to their hearts had been God, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter! Let them recall over and over again those days of suffering and discouragement, the feeble beginnings of Christian faith and practice. Let them adopt, as their own, the language of the Psalmist, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: Surely, I will remember Thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings. Who is so great a God as our God?"

Doubtless the Hebrew Christians followed the counsel of the Apostle, and gratefully and helpfully remembered the former days. It inspired them to run patiently the race that was set before them, and fight the good fight of faith. The Holy Ghost, whose descent we this day commemorate, filled them with His grace and comfort as they recalled the past. This was to be a part of the work of the Blessed Spirit according to the promise of our Lord. He said to His disciples, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My

name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." It is this fulfilment of the Blessed Spirit's work in the minds of the Evangelists, recalling accurately the words and works of Christ, which certifies beyond all dispute or question the truth and reliability of the Gospels. He who this day descended upon their authors in the form of cloven tongues of fire, He the Spirit of all truth, inspired them to write the Gospels. They could not err in the statement of fact or doctrine, because they were under the immediate supervision of the Infallible Spirit. Therefore we may absolutely know the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed.

"Call to remembrance the former days." Doubtless the Hebrew Christians followed the counsel and obeyed the injunction of the Apostle. Doubtless they did so to the comfort and strengthening of their souls in faith and love and patience. The dealings of God with them in the former years, giving them strength in hours of weakness, comfort in nights of sorrow, and help in every time of need; the memory of these dealings of God would fill them with cheer and hope and gladness. The lagging racer would spur on to greater efforts toward the goal; the tired pilgrim would renew his strength to reach home; the wounded soldier would draw again the sword to strike heavier blows for victory.

I have selected the Apostle's words for my text this morning as appropriate to the fiftieth anniver-

sary of the founding of our church. Half a century has passed away since the Rev. Dr. Vaughan was elected Rector of this Parish. The exact date of his election was May 23, 1848. An effort was made the year previous to start a mission, but it was not a success. The Rev. Samuel A. Clark was invited on February 17, 1847, to take charge of it. Mr. Lemuel Coffin, with certain members of St. Andrew's and Epiphany Churches, formed a Vestry and wrote a letter to Dr. Clark to help them in the good work. They had started a Sunday-school in the office of a lumber-yard at the corner of Seventeenth and Spruce Streets. A dozen children were present on the first Sunday, and six weeks later there were 103 present. In this office occasional night services were held, and to light the place the Vestrymen used to bring candles in their pockets.

A large room, capable of seating 250 persons, was secured two months later at the corner of Twentieth and Hand Streets, and was occupied for two years for Church and Sunday-school purposes. Here Rev. Mr. Clark preached and administered the sacraments for two months, and then retired from the field. For about seven months services were suspended, and then they were resumed by the Rev. Dr. John A. Vaughan on the 23d of January, 1848. The following May, at a meeting of the Vestry held in the Vestry-room of St. Luke's Church, a Charter of Incorporation of the Church of the Mediator having been obtained, Dr. Vaughan

was elected Rector of the Church. Of the twelve good men who secured the charter only one is living, the venerable and excellent Treasurer of the Diocese, Mr. Benjamin G. Godfrey. All the rest have fallen asleep in Jesus.

The Rev. Dr. Vaughan in accepting the Rectorship stated that "he had connected himself with a Female Seminary, but that the connection would not materially interfere with his duties as Pastor of the Church." This Protestant-Episcopal Seminary was situated on Penn Square, under the shadow of our great City Hall and Pennsylvania Railroad Station. There were then four green squares ornamented with grass and trees, divided by Market and Broad Streets. This school was prosperous, and some of the best young ladies in Philadelphia were educated within its halls; and I have the pleasure of addressing some of them now. I may remark here that the first chancel furniture of our Church was presented to it by Dr. Vaughan's pupils. They held a fair and raised the sum of $160 for this purpose.

The saintly Rector, whom nobody could know without reverencing and loving, went to his work of building up the Parish with great earnestness. In less than five months, by the co-operation of the Vestry, he secured the lot on which this Church and School-house are built, at a cost of $2400—$2000 of which he advanced as a loan, and the whole of which he subsequently presented to the Church. Then followed the erection of the Sunday-school building, which was finished and occupied in

February, 1849. For two years the congregation had worshipped in an upper room of the Western Hose House, on Twentieth Street, and now moved to the Sunday-school House. The first and second stories were also used by the Sunday-schools, while the third story was occupied by the sexton of the Church and his wife.

Dr. Vaughan, being interested in education, started a night-school and had eighty scholars. For two years and a half he exercised his loving, unselfish ministry in this Parish. He not only contributed generously to the charities of the Church, but gave to it his time, and talents, and services, without salary.

On the 30th of July, 1849, the corner-stone of the Church of the Mediator was laid by the Rt. Rev. Alonzo Potter, Bishop of the Diocese. As a college lad, drawn by curiosity, I witnessed this interesting service. This yellow, faded slip of paper which I hold in my hand is one of the original forms used at the laying of the corner-stone. I recall the scene with great vividness — the peerless Bishop, the saintly, venerable Pastor, the reverent gathering, and the curious crowds of operatives in the factory windows on Pine Street.

On the 5th day of April, 1851, the Church was consecrated by Bishop Potter. On the 5th of May, a month later, Dr. Vaughan resigned his Rectorship of this Church. On this occasion he presented to the Vestry the entire church lot without any reserved interest, and in fee simple. "Of

this," he requests, "I wish no public notice whatever to be taken."

In his resignation he alludes to his feeble health, and uses these words: "In thus retiring from a position associated with the earlier organization of the Parish, and one to me of much personal interest, the Vestry will permit me to allude to the friendly intercourse subsisting between themselves and the undersigned during a period necessarily encumbered with the various cares and anxieties growing out of the erection of a church edifice, and yet never for a moment interrupted by any unpleasant feeling. In alluding to my unabated affection for the Parish I can truly say that a sincere desire for its welfare is my sole motive for resigning the Rectorship."

In response to this resignation the Vestry adopted a resolution expressing with unanimous vote their grateful thanks for his acceptable services and great generosity, and their profound regret in parting with him. Soon after Dr. Vaughan's death, which occurred on the 5th of June, 1865, the surviving members of the first Vestry of the Church erected to his memory the mural tablet back of the pulpit. The epitaph carved thereon is "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." Below this is the Latin motto—"In virtue he lived, in memory he lives, in glory he shall live."

Having finished the Church, he felt that his work here was concluded, and left to his successors all the conveniences of successfully carrying it on.

He had the hard labor of breaking up the fallow ground, preparing the soil, and sowing the seed. To others he left the easier, pleasanter work of gathering in the harvests. He dug the foundation and reared the pile, and left to others the sweet labor of filling the temple with the fragrant incense of holy prayer and praise. He planted the vineyard and left it to others to gather the hanging clusters. He preferred the labor and toil to the recompense. And so he left the Church he loved so well and unselfishly to those who should follow him in the sacred ministry.

From this Parish he went to other fields. He originated the Market Street Mission, out of which grew the Chapel of the Holy Trinity. Then he started a Mission Sunday-school some distance from the city, on the Media Railroad. During the war of the Rebellion he ministered to the wants of our soldiers and sailors in camp and hospital. He was the compiler of a soldier's and sailor's Prayer-book and Hymnal. Tens of thousands of them were distributed in hospitals and on the tented field. Many of them were also sent with Testaments to the Confederate prisoners in our hands. He ever had a smile of love and a word of sympathy for all. He was full of the Holy Ghost. On the night of Whitsunday, 1865, he was suddenly called to his heavenly home. I shall not soon forget the solemn scene at his funeral service, held in the Church of the Covenant. Clergymen who had known him a score of years were present and bore witness to his unaffected piety and fervent zeal. Students for the

ministry were there to mourn the loss of a revered Professor. The pupils of the Institution for the Blind were there to testify their affection for a benefactor whom not having seen they loved. The members of our Vestry were there who so loyally and generously seconded his efforts in founding this Church and supporting it in its early years. All bore witness to his guileless character, his unaffected piety, and his great charity. Less than a month after his death this mural tablet was placed on the wall of the church he loved so well. At the first stated meeting of the Vestry after his decease the following Preamble and Resolutions were unanimously passed:

"*Whereas*, It has pleased the All-wise Creator to remove from the sphere of his holy influence and example, and the scene of his self-denying labors, the Rev. John A. Vaughan, D.D.; and

"*Whereas*, The Rev. Dr. Vaughan was the first Rector, the benefactor and friend of this Parish; therefore be it

"*Resolved*, That we, the Vestry of the Church of the Mediator, thank God for the holy life, the pure conversation, and the bright example of our revered and beloved friend.

"*Resolved*, That we record with gratitude the generosity, the fidelity, and unostentatious piety which he exhibited while Rector of this Church, and that we will ever affectionately cherish his blessed memory and holy example."

On this jubilee of the founding of our Church, in calling up before our minds his blessed memory and holy example, I have uttered my eulogy of Dr.

Vaughan. Surely he was worthy of all I have said. In the days of weakness he was the strength of this Church; in the days of darkness and discouragement he was her light and hope. Brave, true-hearted, generous laymen and women aided him with their means and prayers and services. His Vestry stood by him shoulder to shoulder and hand to hand. And so the Church was built and the work of the Lord prospered.

"Call to remembrance the former days." Dr. Vaughan was succeeded in the Rectorship by the Rev. William W. Arnett, D.D., on the 1st of July, 1851, and he continued in office, serving with acceptance, until February, 1853. Rev. G. Lewis Platt, S.T.D., took charge of the Church in the following May, and served the Parish until December, 1855. Rev. William W. Spear, D.D., accepted a call in June, 1856, and remained until July, 1859. These good men built up the Parish, and the latter greatly improved the interior of the church building. Dr. Platt is my only predecessor in the Rectorship now living. It has been my privilege and happiness to serve this Church more than thirty-eight years.

As we think of the fifty years which have come and gone since the saintly Vaughan began his ministry in this Parish, we are reminded of the fact that God buries His workmen, but carries on His work. Let us praise Him for all that He has wrought here; for the light this Church has brought into many homes; for the peace it has breathed into many hearts; for the salvation it has brought to

many souls. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the praise." Let us each adopt the sentiment of the sweet singer:

"I love Thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood.
For her my tears shall fall;
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my prayers and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end."

APPENDIX.

The following are the names of the first Wardens and Vestrymen of the Church of the Mediator, Philadelphia :

Edward Carpenter,
Joseph H. Hildeburn,
Benjamin G. Godfrey,
John Bohlen, Jr.,
Henry S. Camblos,
Alexander Brown,
William L. Rehn,
Jonas E. Stone,
Lemuel Coffin,
Christopher Wetherill,
A. May Stevenson,
Zebulon Locke.